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DATAMATION

FOR MANAGERS OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY WORLDWIDE

CAREERS IN CRISIS

Managers Question Their Future as Change Grips the Profession

Also in This Issue:
CASE vs. 4GLs
What Smart PC Buyers Want
Streamlining Network Memory
Wringing Value From Old Systems

AUG. 15, 1989

DATAMATION

FOR MANAGERS OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY WORLDWIDE

VOLUME 35
NUMBER 16

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BY RALPH EMMETT CARLYLE The creation of the independent business unit in many corporations has spurred the migration of IS activities to support this business entity. IS pros who have ventured out into the field are finding that life in the business units requires different attitudes toward end users and, often, different technical skills. Some have switched allegiances to such an extent that they grumble about their former colleagues back in central IS, the old "glass house."

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Cover Photography by Comstock

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BY DAVID STAMPS The fate of fourth-generation programming languages, seemingly always in question, is yet again being called into doubt. Will competition from computer-aided software engineering tools finally make 4GLs obsolete?

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BY JEFF MOAD The lack of storage management tools for networked workstations has meant that administrators must check space manually from server to server. But now a host of integrated, automated tools is coming to their rescue.

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BY JANE MAJKIEWICZ AND BOB FRANCIS Price is still the primary consideration in most personal computer purchase decisions. But, as PC technology becomes more complex, IS managers are finding that they must consider other factors, like compatibility and reliability, more carefully.

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BY SHARON FISHER Network operating systems, network drivers and user interfaces consume large chunks of a personal computer's local memory. But users are finding ways to pare back these packages and expand the memory available for applications.

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Wringing Value From Old Systems 57

BY RON BOHLIN AND CHRISTOPHER HOENIG No one doubts the wisdom of using information technology to gain strategic value. But IS shops, still focusing on the maintenance of existing systems, often feel unable to pursue broader objectives. A fundamental review of systems can free up resources and refocus IS operations.

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The Right IS Chemistry 61

BY ANGELINE PANTAGES How does IS support a company that's going global? For British industrial giant Imperial Chemical Industries, the answer was major IS organizational change, based on carefully planned centralization and flexibility.

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EDITED BY LINDA RUNYAN A report on products, services and methodologies for IS managers in manufacturing businesses. (Not included in all issues.)

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The Winds of Change Blow Hard

Psychologists tell us that some of the most profound events in life and those with the most far-reaching personal implications are the death of a parent or loved one; marriage; and major career changes, including the loss of a job. Certainly, such profundity is much in evidence these days in the IS industry. With many central IS sites breaking up, many IS activities being off-loaded to outside vendors and new organizational entities such as independent business units forming, these are indeed tumultuous times for IS professionals on all rungs of the career ladder.

At the top, so-called chief information officers may be feeling the full force of the winds of change. According to the second annual Coopers & Lybrand/DATAMATION survey of top IS leaders, 64.7% of CIOs say the biggest obstacle to fulfilling their role is cultural resistance, and another 47.5% indicated that uncertain job expectations is a major worry.

Photograph by Dave Brady

HARVARD'S DEARDEN: Warns about turning IS into a profit center.

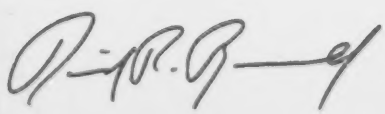
But the changes are being felt not only at the top. Others, writes senior writer Ralph Emmett Carlyle in our cover story this issue, "Careers in Crisis," page 12, have been reduced to the status of unhappy out-of-work pros who are trying to figure out how and where they fit in today's IS world. Some, though, have found ways to adapt. "Some of the IS pros displaced in the off-loading trend are going to work for the outside vendors themselves," Carlyle says. "For some, the shift can be positive. They could gain stock and benefits in a thriving professional services company and more varied work assignments."

Whatever the outcome for individuals, the one certainty is that the profession has changed—and changed irreversibly. IS managers cannot go back. But, the key to coping with this change, writes Carlyle, will be in recognizing not whether there are opportunities in IS but where they are and where they will be in years to come.

The Fate of Fourth-Generation Languages

Next up is a story about the impact of computer-aided software engineering technology on fourth-generation languages. In "CASE vs. 4GLs," page 29, freelancer David Stamps says that 4GLs are still useful, but over time these high-level languages will have a different role to play. Tune in to our story for the verdict on 4GLs.

Also on the docket this issue is some street-smart advice for all the PC buyers out there in IS land. Dallas bureau manager Bob Francis and assistant editor Jane Majkiewicz report in "What Smart PC Buyers Seek," page 49, that sharp buyers are focusing more on functionality, reliability and compatibility than ever before. So, keep checking those prices to find the best deal, but don't be blindsided. There's more at stake than the price tag.



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A Conservative IS Spending Approach

The latest IS survey by DATAMATION and Price Waterhouse reveals that executives are being particularly cautious about spending.

Nearly 60% of major computer users are holding the line on information systems spending for the remainder of the year. For every two IS executives planning to increase or decrease their outlays for hardware, software, staffing and the like in 1989, three indicate that their IS budgets will remain unchanged compared with last year, according to a recent survey by DATAMATION and the New York City accounting firm Price Waterhouse.

These budget-conscious IS executives are so on top of spending that they no longer rank cost containment as a major issue. The 750 IS executives surveyed in this latest DATAMATION/Price Waterhouse survey rank four other challenges ahead of budget matters: meeting deadlines; predicting the impact of new information technology on their businesses; systems and program maintenance; and communications integration.

Although the survey reveals heightened interest in distributed processing, it's barely enough to put the hardware demand picture in a positive light. The 44% of IS executives who indicated that their hardware spending will increase this year is almost exactly balanced by the 43% who said that their equipment budgets will remain unchanged. And, a full 13% of IS execs are chopping CPU outlays.

For applications software, spending will stay the same for 52% of survey respondents, decrease for 11% and rise for 37%. Of the users with plans to increase applications investments, most employ between 500 and 10,000 workers—indicating that larger companies are swallowing their second helping of applications software with fewer problems than they did their first course. The biggest investors are manufacturing companies.

Financial and information firms are joining universities, research houses and utilities in keeping systems software purchases level. Since the main elements of systems software activity relate to operating systems, data base management software, access and control software, teleprocessing monitors and communications controllers, the survey suggests that many user organizations have completed initial efforts to install such software.

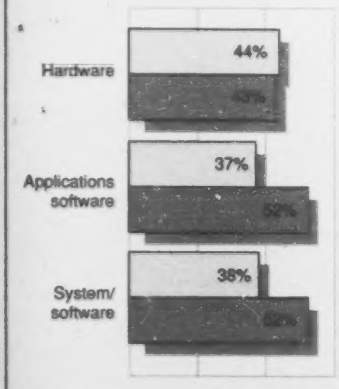
The conservative IS investment approach is just as obvious on the staffing side of the cost equation. Only one out of five users surveyed is planning to increase outside IS staff and services.

Being a member of an inside IS staff may be no bed of roses either. Several user organizations with between 1,000 and 10,000 employees seem to be embarking on a salary policy that provides annual increases of up to only 5%. Smaller users seem much more generous, planning IS pay raises of between 5% and 20%. The different approaches to compensation suggest that in large companies, where technology probably has stabilized, the desire to pay top dollar for systems and programming people has diminished. Conversely, small companies whose rapid growth heavily depends on increasing use of systems still seem willing to pay a premium for programming talent. ▭

Conservative IS Stripes

Users are keeping their costs in check.

IS Executives' Spending Projections for 1989



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